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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRISTINA 000593

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DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE  
NSC FOR BRAUN  
USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KV](#) [UNMIK](#)  
SUBJECT: KOSOVO: SIGNS OF HARDLINE SERB CONSOLIDATION IN  
RUN-UP TO FINAL STATUS

REF: A. PRISTINA 464  
[1](#)B. PRISTINA 520  
[1](#)C. PRISTINA 521

Classified By: CHIEF OF MISSION TINA KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Recent disturbing moves by Serb hardliners linked with the Belgrade's Coordinating Center for Kosovo (CCK) and the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) provide evidence that Belgrade is working to sow fear and mistrust between Kosovo Serbs and their Albanian and international interlocutors. Kosovo Serbs, particularly those in enclaves south of the Ibar river, have been pressured not to participate in events linked to the international community or the Kosovo government. Meanwhile, hardline Bishop Artemije and others in the SOC and GOS have recently made their own unhelpful moves, such as demanding the flying of a Serbian flag over the recently reconstructed Monastery in Zociste and persisting in their attempts to disrupt the work of the Reconstruction Implementation Commission (RIC). Although we have seen considerable unhappiness with this line from Kosovo Serbs in the enclaves, we have no reason to expect these hardliners to change their strategy. END SUMMARY.

CCK PRESSURE ON THE SOUTH: VRBOVAC...

[1](#)2. (C) In an apparent effort to consolidate its hold not only in the north of Kosovo but within Serb enclave areas in the south, we have seen increasing evidence of attempts by Belgrade's Coordinating Center for Kosovo (CCK) to sow fear and mistrust between local Serb communities and their Albanian and international interlocutors. On July 6, we received a report from USKFOR in Vrbovac (Vitina/Viti municipality) describing a complaint by a local Serbian Orthodox priest about the activities of Vrbovac CCK activist Dejan Moskic. Moskic had made outrageous statements to local Serb villagers, saying that the routine dismantling of a USKFOR forward operating base was in fact a sign that American troops would soon depart the area, to be replaced by Russian troops who would "look for traitors" among the local population. Moskic also encouraged local Serbs to wear "Tsar

Lazar Guard" t-shirts during the Vidovdan holiday June 28.  
(Note: June 28 is the much-commemorated date of the 1389  
Battle of Kosovo, in which Tsar Lazar was defeated by Ottoman  
forces. End Note.)

...SILOVO...

13. (C) At the widely-covered inauguration of a UK-funded  
sewage system in the Serb village of Silovo (Gjilan/Gnjilane  
municipality) July 17, Kosovo media noted the boycott of the  
event by the beneficiaries themselves, who were pressured not  
to attend by former local CCK leader and local IDP activist  
Milorad Todorovic. UK Liaison Office DPO Ruari O'Connell  
told poloff that Todorovic attempted to block the  
participation of PM Ceku and any other Albanian PISG  
representatives from the event, but that the UK office went  
ahead anyway because the local Serbs did not oppose the  
project. Some local Serbs did appear, bravely asserting to  
broadcaster RTK that they wished "both our governments could  
cooperate." For his part, Ceku used his speech at the event  
as an opportunity to highlight Belgrade's "manipulation" of  
local Serbs.

...AND BRESTOVIK

14. (SBU) In the Serb village of Brestovik (Peje/Pec  
Municipality), village leader Miodrag Dasic told the press  
July 17 that the village is suffering a water shortage,  
directly blaming the CCK and accusing it of blacklisting  
Serbs who work with Kosovo institutions or the international  
community and therefore prohibiting constructive cooperation  
between the village and the municipality on these problems.  
Saying that he had received no help from the CCK, he asked

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the press "now that we are afraid to cooperate with anyone,  
to whom can we turn?"

LITTLE TRACTION IN BABUSH

15. (C) Serb returnees to the Ferizaj/Urosevac-area village  
of Srpski Babush (ref B) have also expressed their  
displeasure with CCK and the Serbian government. In a July  
12 interview with Kosovo Serb KiM radio, village leader  
Novitsa Jovanovic expressed his frustration about the  
complete lack of support from the Serbian government, and  
told us July 18 that the village had yet to receive any help  
from Serbia or the CCK, adding that KFOR MNTF-E U.S. BG  
Earhart "will always be a welcome guest in our village"  
because of his attention to returnees' needs after their  
arrival in late June. During a July 21 CODEL visit to the  
village, Jovanovic continued to praise USKFOR, UNDP,  
Ferizaj/Urosevac municipality, and others for helping the  
village, but never mentioned the Serbian government.

MITROVICA: PRESSURE ON SERBS WHO COOPERATE WITH USOP

16. (C) On July 9, Dajana Gosmanac, Kosovo Serb American  
Corner Coordinator in north Mitrovica, reported to PAO that  
she is under increasing pressure from local politicians, whom  
she would not identify, because of her work with USOP. She  
said she is told that she is "collaborating with the enemy,"  
and that her daughter, who traveled to the U.S. last year on a  
USG-funded fellowship, now feels ashamed of having done so.

Gosmanac, who has worked extensively with USOP in the past,  
including participation in training seminars in Pristina and  
Croatia, feared that politics was creeping into her everyday  
work, which she sees as purely cultural.

PROVOCATIONS IN ZOCISTE, PRIZREN

17. (C) On July 13, nearly 2,000 Serbs attended a  
celebration of the reconstruction of the Zociste monastery  
(Rahovec/Orahovac municipality), during which a Serbian flag  
was flown from the belfry. Local Albanians, including the  
local KLA War Veterans Association, were offended by the  
flag's continued presence in the days following the event and

by press interviews given by hardline Bishop Artemije to both Kosovo- and Serbia-based media outlets in which he asserted it was appropriate that the flag fly over Serbian territory, adding that KFOR could take it down if it were so inclined.

¶8. (C) Moderate SOC leader Father Sava of Decani Monastery (protect) told USOP that Artemije issued the original instruction to fly the flag and has insisted that it remain there regardless of the consequences, which Sava and his patron, Bishop Teodosije, fear could stir conflict in Serb communities near Orahovac. Upping the stakes, on July 26, monks at the Holy Archangels Monastery outside Prizren also raised a Serbian flag above their monastery. On July 29, Holy Archangels monk Father Benedict gave an interview to the Kosovo daily "Express," in which he said that the monastery was Serbian territory and that Serbian flags would fly over all SOC monasteries and churches in Kosovo. (Note: UNMIK and KFOR are monitoring the situation closely and believe that while it is not critical now, the continued presence of flags above SOC sites could exacerbate extremist feelings among a population fed up this summer with high temperatures, chronic water shortages and delays in the decision on Kosovo's final status. End Note).

#### ARTEMIJE STILL WORKING AGAINST CHURCH RECONSTRUCTION...

¶8. (C) According to Father Sava, Artemije has also refused to bless churches reconstructed by the Reconstruction Implementation Commission (RIC), and has not allowed nuns at the Gracanica monastery to paint icons for a reconstructed church in Pristina. Artemije refers to holy sites rebuilt by the RIC as "Teodosije's churches," considering them an abomination. During a July 21 meeting with CODEL Bean, Artemije referred to "150 churches" destroyed since 1999, yet

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refused to mention the RIC and its good work, much to the dismay of Teodosije. Sava told us that "it is incredible how much they (SOC hard-liners and the Serbian government) are hysterically against reconstruction and anything constructive in Kosovo."

#### ...HAND IN HAND WITH BELGRADE

¶9. (C) Although hardline Serbian Ministry of Culture representative Gordana Markovic has been replaced as the official Serbian government delegate to the RIC (ref C), she has continued her attempts to disrupt church reconstruction. RIC chairwoman Emma Carmichael told poloff July 20 that she has been compelled to intervene in order to prevent Markovic from attending RIC meetings. Markovic forced herself into the June RIC meeting, declaring that "Samardzic has authorized me to be here," after which Carmichael asked her to leave the building. Markovic reappeared for the July 17 meeting but was again stopped (this time at the front of the building). Carmichael expressed relief that Serbian President Boris Tadic's DS party controls the Ministry of Culture, which in turn appoints Serbia's representative to the RIC, thus insulating it from DSS-linked hardliners in the Ministry for Kosovo.

#### LOCAL SERBS DESPAIR, BUT CANNOT EVADE THE MACHINATIONS

¶10. (C) Recent conversations with moderate Kosovo Serb politicians Oliver Ivanovic and Lipljan major Momir Cankovic provide some insight on how ordinary Serbs view these machinations. Neither believed that Belgrade provides largesse for Kosovo Serbs out of any real concern for their welfare, but rather uses the threat of removing salaries, pensions and other payments to maintain control in Serb-majority areas. Cankovic expressed the common fear among local Serbs that the Belgrade-provided public sector salaries of Kosovo Serbs will be cut off once status is resolved, a factor many Serbs are considering now in deciding whether to stay or leave Kosovo in the event of an independence declaration by Kosovar Albanians.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) While the evidence remains anecdotal, there appears to be an emerging pattern both within the Belgrade-run CCK and other institutions associated with it, like the Serb Orthodox church, to enforce an increasingly strict policy of separation between local Serb communities and both Albanian and international interlocutors. In some cases, this has extended even further into acts that are both provocative and dangerous. We have not yet seen a Serb community refuse our aid or cut off ties completely, but it has happened to other international donors and it is clear to our colleagues at USKFOR that CCK interference is in several instances hampering their efforts to ensure close ties to Serb areas in their AOR. We can expect such a pattern to intensify as negotiations on Kosovo's status draw to a close and we move closer to independence for Kosovo, though we are using every methodology at hand to keep the lines of communication open and clear. End comment.  
KAIDANOW